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SUBJECT: PM FAYEZ PLANS "CONTROLLED" POLITICAL
LIBERALIZATION, IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE GULF

Classified By: Amb. Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (b) (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) New PM Faisal al-Fayez told the Ambassador October 28 that he hopes to implement needed but "controlled" political reforms, reaching out to political parties (including Islamists), NGOs and communities in the process. He sees great economic challenges, especially in controlling the budget deficit, but hopes to work with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for assistance. The Ambassador reviewed Jordan's cooperation with the new Iraqi government, the U.S.-Jordan extradition treaty, and human rights issues. END SUMMARY.

"CONTROLLED" POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION

12. (C) A very relaxed, comfortable and jovial Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez received the Ambassador and DCM in his new office October 28. Fayez said he is aware of the problems facing him and his government, but cited his direct relationship with King Abdullah as an important asset. Queried by the Ambassador about the new government's rhetorical focus on political reform, Fayez expressed his intention to proceed with "controlled" political liberalization through measured steps. It was imperative, he argued, that Jordan open up politically, but it was also imperative to move gradually to maintain stability. Fayez said he intended to open a dialogue with all factions of society -- political parties (including the Muslim Brotherhood/Islamic Action Front), members of Parliament, pressure groups, and communities. Fayez agreed that there is a particular need to strengthen NGOs and other independent institutions, saying that this is precisely why the King had chosen lawyer/women's activist Asma Khader as spokesperson for the government.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES? LOOK TO THE GULF

13. (C) Fayez smilingly listed off the economic challenges he faces, especially the need to increase revenues and lower the budget deficit. He said he planned to travel to Saudi Arabia soon to seek an extension for one year of the current deal which supplies Jordan 50,000 bbls/day of Saudi crude free of charge. Fayez said he and his father have had historically good relations with the al-Saud, particularly Riyadh Governor Prince Salman. Fayez also expressed a desire to travel to Kuwait, saying that members of the Kuwaiti parliament, not the government, were the obstacle to improved bilateral ties (Comment: and, presumably, increased Kuwaiti assistance as well. End Comment). He thought he could open a dialogue with those Kuwaitis who are hostile to Jordan.

IRAQ ASSETS, EXTRADITION TREATY, HUMAN RIGHTS

14. (C) The Ambassador reviewed for Fayez the extensive cooperation between Jordan and the new Iraqi government/Coalition Provisional Authority. Fayez was supportive of continued Jordanian engagement with Iraq. The Ambassador laid out the state of play on Iraqi assets and the status of the refugee camps at Ruwaished and in No Man's Land on the Jordan-Iraq border. He told Fayez he had asked former PM Abul Ragheb to present the U.S.-Jordan bilateral extradition treaty to Parliament, and asked Fayez to do the same. He also raised a prominent human rights case. Fayez professed ignorance about the specifics of these issues based on his newness in office, but promised to follow up .

15. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.

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GNEHM